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## I SAY Telling the Singapore Story

Angeline Koh

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's message at the launch last month of Herit-ageFest resonated with me.

"Home means you must have some memories, you must have shared experiences and ... some sense of where we came from, why we're here, what it means to us," he had said.

What are memories and shared experiences but stories. And storytelling is what Singa-pore as a nation needs.

When I speak of storytell-ing, I do not mean the "once-upon-a-time" children's fairy tales. Stories are the stuff that

life and memories are made of; our stories shape us. We all have histories, even the quietest of us.

Our shared memories can be painful ones like seeing a loved one through cancer, or happy ones like remembering the old kampung house we grew up in, or silly ones that make us laugh at ourselves.

We have personal, family, community and national stories, which engage not just our minds but our emotions and which glue us together.

Stories are heritage that we leave with our children and our children's children.

Have we come closer to finding our Singapore Story,

What are memories and shared experiences but stories. And storytelling is what Singapore as a nation needs ... Our children need to realise they are heroes in the making. They have the power to become heroes by the brave and sacrificial choices they make – to live well and for the good of others.

our marvel-filled adventures of unlikely knights-turned-heroes on a quest?

There are unsung heroes in our midst – they are people we meet each day in our homes and in our schools, at work and at play.

Our children need to realise they are heroes in the making. They have the power to be-come heroes by the brave and sacrificial choices they make – to live well and for the good of others.

The Singapore Story is the sum total of the stories of her people. So where do we start?

Moving HeritageFest to the heartlands was a step in the right direction. Mr Lee hit the nail on the head when he said these trails should be developed by the community, as a "grass-roots, bottom-up" effort.

In the 2000s, BBC ran two series *Capture Wales* and *Telling Lives* to connect communities. People made digital stories about real-life experiences, using their own photos, words and voice.

Storytelling movements can take off on the digital platform; it can empower ordinary people to share their stories.

But digital storytelling is less developed in Asia, as John Hartley and Kelly McWilliams wrote in the book *Story Circle* (2009).

Here in Singapore, we need to keep telling and listening to our stories. As a digital story-teller who started a storytelling social enterprise, I believe we need to help others find and tell their stories.

The late Dana Atchley, also known as the father of digital storytelling, once said: "The stories and anecdotes we share with one another are the ways we let each other know who we are, where we come from, where we are going, and most impor-tantly, what we care about." ■

DOMINIQUE STRAUSS-KAHN'S ACCUSER TAKES HIM TO COURT IN THE BRONX AS CASE STALLS IN MANHATTAN

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## Downside to multi-cornered presidential race

Letter from Edwin Yeo Tee Yeok

WHILE the prospect of a multi-candidate contest for the Presi-dency looks to be an exciting spectacle, I am concerned that the splitting of votes among the candidates could result in a situ-ation where the winner garners fewer than half of the total votes cast.

In such an event, one would be hard-pressed to justify a "peo-ple's mandate" for the Elected President since more than half of the electorate would not have voted for him.

Such an Elected President may find it hard to gain respect, especially if the contest had been

heated, with emotions running high, or if he had won by a small margin.

Imagine the following sce-nario: The President is escorted to the podium during the Na-tional Day Parade, but only fewer than half of the spectators wel-come him.

I hope this does not happen and that Singaporeans will be mature enough to respect the election outcome.

However, in future, perhaps the authorities could consider amending the election rules to provide for "run-off" elections if no candidate is able to win more than 50 per cent of the total votes cast.

## Where to draw the line in building inclusiveness?

Subsidise trips for treatment too

Letter from Raymond Anthony Fernando

I REFER to the letter "After a fare hike, an inclusive society?" (Aug 3). People with disabilities face huge roadblocks in their lives and a lack of support makes it difficult for them to move on in life.

Family members, who are their backbone, could do with financial support, improved access to services in the community and, above all, they need a break. Respite care is a priority need for families who are "on duty" 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

I am disappointed the Na-tional Council of Social Service's taxi subsidies for disabled peo-ple only support trips to work or school.

Why not extend subsidies for them to go to hospitals and clin-ics for their medical treatment or even for recreational needs?

My wife, whose medical ap-pointments have increased from four to eight a month due to her advanced arthritis, worries about our finances because, on average, I spend about \$160 per month

on taxis. And I do not have a full-time job.

Use logic, not just emotions

Letter from Jeffrey Cheng

IN RESPONSE to the letter "After a fare hike, an inclusive society?" (Aug 3), I have to ask, how much is enough?

There are subsidy schemes to lessen transport costs for people with disabilities going to work, now there needs to be subsidies to satisfy their social needs? Everyone has social needs, but why choose to travel during peak hours?

Some may think I am being unsympathetic toward the phys-ically challenged; I assure you, I am not.

We have to use not only our emotions but also logic to deal with matters like these.

Our Government aims for Singapore to be an inclusive society and is working hard at it, but keep in mind that being physically challenged does not make you "excluded". Everyone has equal rights.

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